

# *North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame*

*established 1996*

as a program of the North Carolina Writers' Network

## 2000 Induction Ceremony

October 15, 2000



Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities  
Southern Pines, North Carolina



Cp806  
N87Lw  
2000

*North Carolina  
Literary Hall of Fame*



GIFT ROBERT G. ANTHONY



*North Carolina  
Literary Hall of Fame*

*2000 Inductees*

A. R. AMMONS

HELEN BEVINGTON

OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN

BURKE DAVIS

ROBERT RUARK

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Lois Wistrand

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Judi Hill

Evalyn P. Gill

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# *North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame*

## Fourth Induction Ceremony

October 15, 2000

2:00 p.m.

### *Schedule for the Day*

WELCOME

Bland Simpson

*Department of English, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

A COMMEMORATIVE POEM ON THE  
CENTENNIAL OF THE BIRTH OF THOMAS WOLFE

by Shelby Stephenson

#### Presenting

Emily Wilson  
Melissa Malouf  
Roy Parker, Jr.  
Burke Davis, III  
Bland Simpson

#### Inductee

A. R. AMMONS  
HELEN BEVINGTON  
OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN  
BURKE DAVIS  
ROBERT RUARK

#### Readers

Alex Albright  
Linda Hobson  
Sally Buckner  
Jan Hensley  
James W. Clark

RECOGNITION OF AWARD'S ARTIST

Bland Simpson—Cathy Kiffney

PRESENTATION OF STUDENT POETRY AWARDS

Evalyn P. Gill

READING OF STUDENT POEM, "Claude Monet's 'Woman with Parasol'"

by Jennifer Galimore

A TRIBUTE TO SAM RAGAN

Roy Parker, Jr.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Bland Simpson

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW



## THE LITERARY HALL OF FAME AWARD

Ceramic artist Cathy Kiffney created this year's North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame Award. Cathy is a North Carolina native who has been creating ceramic art for more than twenty years. For the past five years she has housed her art studio at the old White Cross School in Chapel Hill, which is also the home of the North Carolina Writers' Network. Her sculptures, tile works and functional pieces are widely known for their whimsical design and exuberant color.

When designing this year's literary award, Cathy was inspired by the beauty of the fragrant magnolia blossoms with their waxy green leaves. She chose red Carolina clay to make the tile itself and sculpted the grand Southern Magnolia blossom out of white porcelain clay. While the tile was still moist it was stamped with the award inscription. The inscription was painted with iron and manganese oxide, which were wiped off, leaving a trace of the oxide to enhance the stamped letters. When the piece was dry it was kiln-fired for hardness, then treated with colored and clear glazes and re-fired to a gloss finish.

The completed tile represents a process familiar to everyone involved in an imaginative undertaking, using the raw materials at hand to create something of originality and meaning.





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## FOREWORD

### WEYMOUTH, WRITERS AND WORDS

It is a sturdy house, 96 years old now and still rising among glossy magnolias and tall pines which lean into the Carolina wind. Its elegance is understated, with none of the ostentation one might expect of a twenty-room house. Weymouth served the Boyd family well for seventy years; since 1979 its service has expanded beyond family to community, its mission marked by the good taste which distinguishes its architectural design.

In 1904, James Boyd, a steel and railroad magnate, purchased 1200 acres in Southern Pines and built a home. He christened this new estate "Weymouth," after a town he had visited in England. Set amidst a magnificent stand of virgin long-leaf pines, it served as a country manor where his grandson and namesake, James, often came as a boy to repair frail health and explore the imposing pine forest and surrounding countryside.

Later young James went to Princeton and earned a master's degree at Cambridge. After serving as an ambulance driver during World War I, an experience which left his health even more fragile, he returned to Weymouth for recovery. In 1919, he and his new wife, the former Katharine Lamont, spent their honeymoon in the house, which by now James co-owned with his brother, Jackson. The following year, he and Katharine moved to Weymouth and began redesigning it. They moved part of the original house across Connecticut Avenue to become part of Jackson's new home, now known as the Campbell House. To the remaining structure, they added a second story and two wings, enlarging the Georgian-style house to 9,000 square feet.

James Boyd, now 32 years old, left the management of the family business to his brother while he pursued the dream which had begun when he was editor of his high school newspaper: to become a writer. Boyd's biographer, David Whisnant, observes that Boyd chose to live in Southern Pines because this site "seemed to offer the best conditions for beginning [a literary career]—a reasonable physical comfort, freedom from distractions, and a mild climate...and an opportunity to affirm the tangible values of American life." One of the earliest visitors to the newly-enlarged home was British novelist and playwright John Galsworthy, who, after reading Boyd's stories, encouraged him to try a novel, then, on a trip to New York, urged publishers to "keep an eye on James Boyd." In 1925, Scribner's published Boyd's first novel, *Drums*. It won immediate attention, not only for its story but for its realism—the result of Boyd's extensive and meticulous research.

Boyd went on to write more novels, a number of short stories and a collection of poetry. In 1941, he expanded his career by purchasing and editing the Southern Pines *Pilot*. Meanwhile, his home became a welcome retreat for many of the best writers of the day: Thomas Wolfe, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John P. Marquand, and Paul Green, as well as his editor, the legendary Maxwell Perkins, and his illustrator, N.C. Wyeth. His daughter, Nancy Sokoloff, recalls that "During my father's lifetime there were no 'writers' colonies.' Our living room and that of Paul and Elizabeth Green served as settings for serious work and conversations about Southern writing and its future."

The serious conversations went beyond literature. During World War II, Boyd organized and served as the National Chairman of the Free Company of Players, a group of writers who were concerned that constitutional rights might be compromised during the frenzy of wartime. Among the writers joining him in writing plays for broadcast over national radio were Orson Welles, Paul Green, Archibald MacLeish, and Stephen Vincent Benet.

In 1944, after James Boyd's untimely death, Katharine continued living at Weymouth and publishing the *Pilot*. She and her children donated 400 pine-filled acres to the State for development into the Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve. When she died in 1974, she left the house, remaining land and forest to Sandhills Community College, which in 1977 put the estate on the market. Fearful that this treasure would be demolished by developers, two friends of the Boyds undertook the task of saving it. Elizabeth Stevenson (Buffie) Ives organized Friends of Weymouth; Sam Ragan, then editor of the *Pilot*, rallied support from the State of North Carolina, the Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club, the North Carolina Writers' Conference, and the North Carolina Poetry Society. The first person Ragan approached, playwright Paul Green, made the first donation: \$1,000. Later, Moore County resident Bob Drummond provided a major boost with an initial contribution of \$20,000 and a later donation of an equal amount.

Since 1979, the house, surrounded by twenty-two acres, has flourished as a full-fledged cultural center. College groups and various arts groups hold meetings and retreats here. The great room and back lawn host concerts by chamber music groups and such notables as Doc Watson and lectures by speakers as varied as social critic Tom Wolfe and sociologist John Shelton Reed. There have also been frequent readings by North Carolina writers such as Clyde Edgerton, Kaye Gibbons and Shelby Stephenson, as well as an annual poetry festival the last Saturday in June.

In addition to formal programs, Weymouth has hosted one of former North Carolina Poet Laureate Sam Ragan's favorite projects: residencies offering writers, artists and composers stays of up to two weeks to pursue their art in James Boyd's hospitable home. Poet and novelist Guy Owen was the first writer-in-residence; in 1981, just a few months before his death, he also made his last public reading at Weymouth. By 2000 more than 500 writers and artists have held residencies here. Many testify that their art has flourished on this site; some even credit the hovering spirit of James Boyd and perhaps those of his many literary guests with providing additional creative impetus.

It is fitting that Weymouth, where James Boyd and hundreds of other writers have found congenial conditions for their work, is the site of the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame. It is also fitting that the space set aside for this distinction is the upstairs Boyd Room, where James did his own writing, often by dictating to a stenographer as he paced back and forth, taking on the voices of his characters. Perhaps the spirits of those who are honored here will join the chorus of literary masters whose influence echoes through the halls and across the grounds of Weymouth.

Sally Buckner  
Raleigh, North Carolina

## INTRODUCTION

*And down the centuries that wait ahead there'll be some whisper of our name, some mention and devotion to the dream that brought us here.*

— The Lost Colony by Paul Green

From its earliest days, North Carolina has been blessed with the "mention and devotion" of a great host of writers living and working in the state. A rich literary heritage is a legacy cherished by all North Carolinians.

The North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame is established as a perpetual opportunity to remember, honor and celebrate that heritage. By marking the contribution of its literary giants of every generation, it will support and encourage the further flourishing of excellent literature in the state.

The North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame was the dream of a generation of the state's most dedicated cultural leaders, mobilized by Sam Ragan, former poet laureate of North Carolina. It was authorized by a Joint Resolution of the General Assembly on July 23, 1993, then formally established by a grant from the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources to the North Carolina Writers' Network, a literary organization serving writers and readers across the state since 1985.

The Hall of Fame is physically located in a notable shrine of North Carolina writing. The Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities in Southern Pines is the former home and workplace of novelist James Boyd and his wife Katharine, a distinguished journalist and patron of the arts. The large room where plaques, pictures, books and other memorabilia of the state's honored writers are displayed was Boyd's workroom.

Members of the Hall of Fame are selected by a committee of writers. The goal is to choose widely and inclusively from the great parade of novelists, poets, short story writers, playwrights, journalists and storytellers of all sorts who have called themselves North Carolinians. While the first year honored only those from the past, the Hall of Fame now joins other notable cultural award programs in honoring living writers.

Seventy-five years ago, an editor visiting North Carolina marveled at the literary liveliness of the place where, she said, writers flourished in "an atmosphere of plain living and high thinking that I never experienced before."

In the spirit of those who over the centuries have graced North Carolina with a literature of such quality, beauty and power, the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame proudly honors writers who have achieved enduring stature in their mention and devotion to their art and to the state.

Roy Parker, Jr.  
Fayetteville, North Carolina

# WOLFE

by Shelby Stephenson

*for James W. Clark, Jr.*

For the touch of your father's hands  
on the medallion bed  
you were born in a marriage of clamor

what lay in Julia's hands  
a mother's prayer  
her baby forever

Mabel, playing the piano in the parlor  
your father's fires cold mornings  
*don't offend the boarders*

talking of vacations  
*all the world is sad and lonely*  
tuberculosis, tourists *lookawaylookaway*

"young Shakespeare," your speeches  
thundering, the right moment  
never right for the Hill that could not hold

the gothic-clustered  
readiness, the Harvard years  
and the broad shoulders of the Charles

you could not surrender to the classroom  
Asheville's magnificent  
galaxies

the provinces  
resounding in the people  
who read and saw themselves

the lyricism  
your family was uncomfortable with  
*work is work*

Washington Square  
weekends at Fox Hollow  
Aline and Europe

you flowed  
estranged from home  
again and again, Munich—

faces in the beerhall's  
savage flux  
offended drinkers

Death's smothery pull  
family fanned without the father's  
hand on the chisel

Ben's clumped  
silences  
your gigantic weathering  
a Guggenheim could not  
assuage Aline  
who found a publisher  
among her trellises  
you wore  
a smile your spirit  
grieved Death with every thought of  
home, her fierce  
delicacies, your opposite, radiance, your dark  
loneliness, her influence sparkling  
voluptuous relief's closure  
trembling sadness—*Ben?*

The music  
catches in the far  
reaches Riverside.

Hear the train's  
rails steady  
Dixieland?

Archie Randolph Ammons was born on February 18, 1926, on his family's small farm near Whiteville and later moved to Chadburn. It was a hardscrabble life and growing up in the country during the Great Depression gave him, as one critic observed, "not only an intimate acquaintance with nature but also a keen sense of the precarious nature of existence." His early years on a tobacco and cotton farm provided the pastoral setting for some of his most memorable work, as well as the inspiration for poems about mules, hog-killings, hunting, and farmlands.

Ammons started writing poetry during the long hours aboard a Navy destroyer escort in the South Pacific. After World War II, he attended Wake Forest University, where his interest in science would influence the unique diction of his poetical style. After a few months of graduate school, he became principal of Hatteras Elementary School and absorbed the sights and sounds of the Outer Banks for a year. He also worked jobs as a real estate salesman, an editor, and an executive in a glass manufacturing firm before he began teaching at Cornell University in 1964.

Ammons has been described as a major American poet in the tradition of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. Generally opting for free forms, he has been concerned with man's relationship to nature, the problems of identity, permanence and change, and the processes of nature. His whimsically formatted *Tape for the Turn of the Year* was originally written on a roll of adding machine tape in the form of a journal covering the period December 6, 1963, to January 10, 1964. Many think his *Expressions at Sea Level*, *Corsons Inlet: A Book of Poems* among his best work.

A two-time winner of the National Book Award, plus the Bollingen Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry, Ammons has published nearly thirty volumes of poetry, including *Glare* (1997), *Garbage* (1993), *A Coast of Trees* (1981), *Sphere* (1974), and *Collected Poems 1951-1971* (1972). His many honors include the American Academy of American Poets' 1998



Tony M. Rumble

A. R. AMMONS  
(1926 - )

Tanning Prize, the Poetry Society of America's Robert Frost Medal and the Ruth Lilly Prize, as well as fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

His latest book, *Clare*, was praised for its "riveting, iconoclastic freshness" by the judges who awarded him the \$100,000 Tanning Prize. Despite his many accomplishments, upon learning of this singular Academy honor, Ammons cast his mind back to his early years as a struggling poet. "I greatly appreciate the recognition," he told an interviewer. "It rings back to the earliest days when there was no recognition or support—and it means a lot to hear those bells." The poet lives with his wife Phyllis in Ithaca, New York, where he is Goldwin Smith Professor Emeritus of Poetry at Cornell.

### WHEN I WAS YOUNG THE SILK

When I was young the silk  
of my mind  
hard as a peony head  
unfurled  
and wind bloomed the parachute:

The air-head tugged me  
up,  
tore my roots loose and drove  
high, so high

I want to touch down now  
and taste the ground  
I want to take in  
my silk  
and ask where I am  
before it is too late to know

from *The North Carolina Poems*  
Edited by Alex Albright,  
N.C. Wesleyan College Press, 1994

### SMALL SONG

The reeds give  
way to the  
  
wind and give  
the wind away

from *Collected Poems: 1951-1971*,  
W.W. Norton, 1972  
reprinted by permission of Arlene Phalon,  
W.W. Norton & Co., Inc.



## CROWRIDE

When the crow  
lands, the  
tip of the sprung spruce  
  
bough weighs  
so low, the  
system so friction-free,  
  
the bobbing lasts  
way past any  
interest in the subject.

from *The Really Short Poems of A.R. Ammons*,  
W.W. Norton, 1990  
reprinted by permission of Arlene Phalon,  
W.W. Norton & Co., Inc.

## MULE SONG

Silver will lie where she lies  
sun-out, whatever turning the world does,  
longeared in her ashen, earless,  
floating world:  
indifferent to sores and greengage colic,  
where oats need not  
come to,  
bleached by crystals of her trembling time:  
beyond all brunt of seasons, blind  
forever to all blinds,  
inhabited by  
brooks still she may wraith over broken  
fields after winter  
or roll in the rye-green fields:  
old mule, no defense but a mule's against  
disease, large-ribbed,  
flat-toothed, sold to a stranger, shot by a  
stranger's hand,  
not my hand she nuzzled the seasoning-salt from.

from *Collected Poems: 1951-1971*,  
W.W. Norton, 1972  
reprinted by permission of Arlene Phalon,  
W.W. Norton & Co., Inc.

EASTER MORNING

I have a life that did not become,  
that turned aside and stopped,  
astonished:

I hold it in me like a pregnancy or  
as on my lap a child  
not to grow old but dwell on

it is to his grave I most  
frequently return and turn  
to ask what is wrong, what was  
wrong, to see it all by  
the light of a different necessity  
but the grave will not heal  
and the child,  
stirring, must share my grave  
with me, an old man having  
gotten by on what was left

when I go back to my home country in these  
fresh far-away days, it's convenient to visit  
everybody, aunts and uncles, those who used to say,  
look how he's shooting up, and the  
trinket aunts who always had a little  
something in their pocketbooks, cinnamon bark  
or a penny or nickel, and uncles who  
were the rumored fathers of cousins  
who whispered of them as of great, if  
troubled, presences, and school

teachers, just about everybody older  
(and some younger) collected in one place  
waiting, particularly, but not for  
me, mother and father there, too, and others  
close, close as burrowing  
under skin, all in the graveyard  
assembled, done for, the world they  
used to wield, have trouble and joy  
in, gone

the child in me that could not become  
was not ready for others to go,  
to go on into change, blessings and  
horrors, but stands there by the road  
where the mishap occurred, crying out for  
help, come and fix this or we  
can't get by, but the great ones who  
were to return, they could not or did  
not hear and went on in a flurry and  
now, I say in the graveyard, here  
lies the flurry, now it can't come  
back with help or helpful asides, now  
we all buy the bitter  
incompletions, pick up the knots of  
horror, silently raving, and go on  
crashing into empty ends not  
completions, not rondures the fullness  
has come into and spent itself from

I stand on the stump  
of a child, whether myself  
or my little brother who died, and  
yell as far as I can, I cannot leave this  
place, for  
for me it is the dearest and the worst,  
it is life nearest to life which is  
life lost: it is my place where  
I must stand and fail,  
calling attention with tears  
to the branches not lofting  
boughs into space, to the barren  
air that holds the world that was my  
world

though the incompletions  
(& completions) burn out  
standing in the flash high-burn

momentary structure of ash, still it  
is a picture-book, letter-perfect  
Easter morning: I have been for a  
walk: the wind is tranquil: the brook  
works without flashing in an abundant  
tranquility: the birds are lively with  
voice: I saw something I had  
never seen before: two great birds,  
maybe eagles, blackwinged, whitenecked  
and -headed, came from the south oaring  
the great wings steadily; they went  
directly over me, high up, and kept on  
due north: but then one bird,  
the one behind, veered a little to the  
left and the other bird kept on seeming  
not to notice for a minute: the first  
began to circle as if looking for  
something, coasting, resting its wings  
on the down side of some of the circles:  
the other bird came back and they both  
circled, looking perhaps for a draft;  
they turned a few more times, possibly  
rising—at least, clearly resting—  
then flew on falling into distance till  
they broke across the local bush and  
trees: it was a sight of bountiful  
majesty and integrity: the having  
patterns and routes, breaking  
from them to explore other patterns or  
better ways to routes, and then the  
return: a dance sacred as the sap in  
the trees, permanent in its descriptions  
as the ripples round the brook's  
ripplestone: fresh as this particular  
flood of burn breaking across us now  
from the sun.

from *The North Carolina Poems*,  
edited by Alex Albright,  
N.C. Wesleyan College Press, 1994

Helen Bevington was born and reared in upper New York State, but her career as a writer really began when her husband, Merle, joined the English faculty at Duke University in 1942 and they moved to the outskirts of Durham. She began writing, she once said, "Because of the particular pleasure of living in the country in North Carolina." Her career was launched when she won a poetry contest sponsored by Houghton Mifflin.

In 1946 she published her first collection, *Doctor Johnson's Waterfall*. She is best known for light poems that are witty and polished and marked by a disciplined grace. Her themes often come from her wide reading, her extensive travels in Europe, or the landscapes and lifestyles of her adopted state. Although she refused to take herself seriously as a poet, her poems often strike a somber note.

Soon after her first book came out, her delightful, witty, and sophisticated lines started appearing in the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *New Yorker*, the *Saturday Review*, and the *American Scholar*. To an interviewer, she once said, "My intention is not to write serious poetry. I write verses because I enjoy and like writing, as other people play the piano, sketch, or follow other amusement." She became known, in the words of one critic, for taking "artful notices of life's comedies."

In a memoir of her childhood, *Charley Smith's Girl* (1965), Bevington tells of her youth in upstate New York, where she was born in her grandfather's Methodist parsonage. From high school she entered the University of Chicago for a degree in philosophy, then earned a master's from Columbia with a thesis on Thoreau. While teaching at Bedford Academy, she met Dr. Bevington, whom she married in 1928. He died in 1964, but Mrs. Bevington, who had returned to the classroom in 1943, began teaching English at Duke, writing regularly for the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times Book Review*.

Like *Doctor Johnson's Waterfall*, another volume, *Nineteen Million Elephants* (1950), is made up of poems that treat, with high humor, the things that attracted and amused her in both books and everyday life. Her third volume,



Betty Hodges

## HELEN BEVINGTON (1906- )

*A Change of Sky* (1956), won the Roanoke-Chowan Award and was listed by the *New York Times* among the outstanding books of the year. *When Found, Make a Verse of* (1961) contains favorite quotations, original verses, and short prose commentary.

In 1974 Bevington published *Beautiful Lofly People*, lighthearted essays and poems about writers and poets, for which she received the Mayflower Cup. Her three autobiographical books are *The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm* (1971), about life at Duke between 1942 and 1956; *Along Came the Witch* (1976), her journal of the 1960s; and *The Journey Is Everything, A Journal of the 1970s*. She and Burke Davis were awarded the North Carolina Award for Literature in 1973.

Three poems from

*Dr. Johnson's Waterfall and Other Poems*

Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946

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THINK FIRST OF GREEN

Think first of green, of the green  
It is now—the shimmering trees—  
For you manage better than I  
With a word's inadequacies  
(Though I really doubt anyone  
Can recall green lilac or jade  
In the willow). But try. But try.  
Any green that you please.  
You will see the dazzle I mean.  
Choose merely the depth and shade  
To leave most room in your head  
For the color I had in mind—  
Which was the incredible red,  
Oh, shining among the trees,  
Of the cardinal now in the sun.  
The best way, you will find,  
Is to start with green instead.  
That is how it is done.

AND TALK OF POETRY

We fold our legs and talk of poetry,  
Like Dr. Johnson mighty in debate,  
And, like him, will allow no heresy.  
We are the arbiters (perhaps too late),  
Claiming that April is an urgent theme,  
The flowering Judas timely to the mind,  
All wonder seasonable, a woodland stream,  
A daffodil momentous to mankind.  
So we are still defenders of the moon  
For those who marvel that the moon persists.  
Our view that love is lately opportune  
Marks us, I know, for worse than optimists.  
Even in our time, there is the wind and rain  
That is forgot and must be felt again.

## RETURN

Late in this wintry light I follow back  
The dusty road (here I came down with you),  
Staring at footprints that have left no track,  
At empty fields where summer grasses grew,

To learn of grayness, in a withered place,  
Bare of green opulence I knew it by,  
One certain thing: how well it can erase  
A memory I had of earth and sky.

This is the way we came. I heard your voice  
Through the bright green haze, against the trembling green,  
And green was beautiful. It was my choice  
Of all adornment I had ever seen.

Yet were you here, what praises I could say  
Of the inspired monotony of gray.

from

### CHARLEY SMITH'S GIRL, A MEMOIR

New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965

Addie had worked all spring as secretary to the principal of the Binghamton High School, with enough typing still to keep her at the office through the summer. Charley was unemployed. He stayed busy at home taking care of me and teaching himself, with tremendous enthusiasm, two subjects he especially wanted to know - the Pitman method of shorthand and the Czech language.

Our days together were soon fully occupied. Though I slept upstairs with Addie, in a bedroom hastily furnished for that purpose because of my father's strange sense of propriety, she was gone in the morning when Charley and I got around to breakfast. He would put buns and buttermilk on the table and a record on the victrola, Evan Williams singing from the Messiah, "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth." The whole room shook to their powerful voices, both of them, Williams and Charley, singing a vibrant tenor during the meal: "And because He lives, and because He lives, and because He lives, I too, I too, I too shall live!"

Charley was still holding on to the high note when the record ended and the needle began to scratch. He rose to his feet, the winner, louder and more magnificent to me than any other singer in the world, as he probably was to himself.

We washed our dishes in cold water, though there was plenty of hot. Charley preferred to put his hands in cold water. And he used this brief time in the kitchen to outline a few of his theories and conclusions. He was not a disciplinarian like my mother, but an educator who worried about my ignorance. In a hurry to teach me something, he spoke fast and on a broad scale, touching upon two major themes: Life was the one. And the other was Death.

Charley has been, there is no denying, a lifelong puzzle to me. He remained the stranger, a man I alternately loved and hated, a man I never knew. I believe the reason is that too many contraries met in him. There were the endless contradictions in his nature that I failed to understand or forgive, and because of them I have had to try to write this story. Perhaps I shall only fail again. Yet it was not until I became older than he himself was that summer that I began to realize how far it is possible to feel, as my father felt, both joy and terror at once in being alive

- to despair of one's existence and to love it desperately at the same time, a rejoicer and hell-gazer with equal passion and conviction. Charley lived in heaven and hell, and he knew thoroughly the hot winds of both.

Despite the unquestioned horrors, his aim in life was to live forever. Barring that possibility he would try to hold on till at least a hundred or a hundred and ten. To hold on, he and I drank buttermilk at breakfast and all the other meals; somebody had told him it was the key to longevity. A time before, it had been lemons. These elixirs he did not actually believe in, yet he had to make the placating gestures toward mortality. It was better than submitting without a struggle. Calamity seemed to him his handmaiden, and sorrow loved him dearly: she was so constant to him and so kind. A marked man, he attempted to stave off intimations of doom by taking a firm hold on the realities at hand, by putting his trust in harmless physical objects, such as lemons. When he had lived alone in New York in a hotel bedroom, he kept under his bed a chamberpot brought in his trunk from home. Sometimes he would look at it, "my pot," and reflect that this family heirloom was his only security. It remained his only friend, the one certainty he had left on earth.

Charley was a man, I think, of little faith. He expected little from an afterlife, but he had a passion for living in this world that nearly overwhelmed him. And he tried to convey something of its precious value these mornings to a child of eight. "The first thing you do," he would say briskly, "is keep your bowels open. Then with health and a big appetite all you need besides is sheer fool courage, the courage to survive. *Grit*, in other words. I don't know about you - you look too meek to me, you're so timid, so small for your age. You must eat up and speak up! You must be *strong*, learn to be *strong*, brave, like your mother. She could always fight back and get a good night's sleep afterwards. Addie too, strong as an ox, nothing keeps her awake and nothing stops her."

The thought of Addie reminded him of the absurd pleasure she took in funerals, sufficient proof in itself of her mettle and resolution. She would stand on a street corner to watch a funeral procession as if it were a circus parade, crying like a happy child, "Somebody's having his funeral! What a classy one it is!"

"That's the way I want you to be, exactly like that. Fearless and undismayed," Charley would say. "Maybe women have the secret, after all."

And he would put another record on the phonograph. "A Wonderful Saviour Is Jesus, My Lord."

His mind went back darkly at times to my brother Raymond, who died at birth. Charley claimed, at such moments believed, that all the many disasters of his life had begun on the hideous day when he lost his only son. Death was more than he could bear, the one awful, unbelievable, unpardonable fact of existence.

"I suppose you don't realize yet what death is. Or even that there is such a thing. Do you?"

"No," I said. It was always safer to say no.

"You're too young," Charley said, "and still lucky. It hasn't knocked at your door. No one you love has ever died."

It was not a question. I didn't have to tell him. I didn't have to answer.

"Not a day goes by, not a minute of my life," Charley said, "that I don't grieve for him. If only he could have lived! Fourteen years old he would be now, almost a man. Afterwards I never wanted another child for fear it too would have to die."

He looked at me and smiled wanly. "I was wrong that time, wasn't I? Thank God." But his face darkened again. "You never get over it," he said. "It might have happened yesterday. When you really love someone, you die with him. You never forget it - the unbearable loss and the grief."

Charley then went to work till lunchtime on shorthand and Czech, both of which he cordially invited me to learn with him. He soon gave up, impatient at my slow grasp, and taught me instead to say the alphabet backwards – that is, he advised me to learn it backwards, and I did as I was told. Why it seemed a good idea he didn't say. After a while I could rip it off in a single breath, "Z-y-x-w-v-u-t-s-r-q-p-o-n-m-l-k-j-i-h-g-f-e-d-c-b-a." And though it is an accomplishment I'm seldom asked to display publicly, it is one I've been inordinately proud of ever since....

A question baffling to Charley off and on all summer was whether or not I was really bright. I appeared no more than half-bright to him, with my monosyllables and vacant air. Yet the fact was I was supposed to be. He would stop work sometimes to watch me staring off idly into space and shake his head, pondering how many brains I had.

"You say you get 100 in arithmetic?" he would ask. The news impressed him that I had been skipped a grade in school, from Miss Allie Wilcox's third grade to Miss Ella Van Dusen's fifth, which I would enter in September. Charley couldn't imagine how on earth it had happened. Finally he laid it to my mother's being on the faculty.

By occasional probing, he was unable to discover that I knew anything at all about geography, history, world events, or life in general. My spelling was childish, my grammar shaky. "Aren't I?" I would say, to his hooting scorn. The worst blow was to find with musical parents, I had to turn out unmusical. Though my mother had given me piano lessons for the last three years, the one piece I knew and reluctantly performed on the old-fashioned reed organ in the corner was "To a Little Violet." Charley hated it, particularly when I played and sang him the words.

After a hasty lunch of buns and buttermilk, we went to the matinee five afternoons a week. The movie at the Orpheum, with two acts of vaudeville, began at two o'clock after which we had a sarsaparilla and usually went on to the nickelodeon to see an episode of Pearl White in "The Perils of Pauline," arriving home after Addie had started supper. We saw a number of pictures twice. By midsummer I began to object to sitting through another show, filled with yearning instead to stay on the open-air trolley for a longer ride or to make a shopping trip to Woolworth's.

"Come on, come on! Let's get ourselves in off the street," Charley would cry impatiently pulling me along. "I don't want anyone to see me here in broad daylight. How would I look? – a man out of work, a grown man leading a child!"

One day in August he told me the news of a terrible war just beginning in Europe. "Let's get inside fast and forget it," Charley said. "I want to go in somewhere and hide."

I remember the plot of one movie, "The Secret" (with Bessie Love? Alice Lake?), because of a brief conversation between us as we walked away from the theater. The story concerned an unfortunate young girl who gave birth to a baby and later tried to keep her secret hidden from the man she married. I followed it with wide-eyed interest.

"Did you catch on?" Charley asked when it was over. "Did you get the point what the poor girl's secret was?"

"No," I said.

That was the end of that. No wonder he thought me simpleminded. He must have looked in vain to find anything of himself in me. I wasn't bright enough to use my head and figure things out.

If we happened to reach home before Addie came from work, we rushed wildly to the front door to greet her, her arms full of groceries, her face lit up in eager, wondering delight. You would think she had been ten years away. Charley rapturously embraced her, packages and all, as if she had come just in time to save his life, sweeping her into the house with loud fervent cries of rejoicing.



"Thank God, oh thank God, you're home at last! Oh, Adeline, my only love, I've missed you something fierce, absolutely the longest day of my life. Oh, dear God, I'm *hungry*!"

Over his shoulder she laughed as he kissed her face and held her tightly in his arms. When she escaped, she gave me too her love.

"My dearest girl," she would say, "it makes your father and me so happy to have you here!"

All was well and all manner of thing was well with Addie home. She seemed a haven compared to Charley; she was calm and steady and sensible, she was loving, she was always the same. In her plain blouse and skirt, her shining braids pinned one over each ear, she moved quickly about her housework – we two tagging after her – answering Charley in Czech as he recited the words he had learned that morning, praising the neat pages of shorthand notes he showed her. After all, he was learning both languages to please her, because she knew them. Sometimes he wrote her comical messages in shorthand. Sometimes I think he spoke his love in Czech, for she would stop correcting his pronunciation to listen raptly with an adoring smile.

I talked freely to Addie, confiding to her in the kitchen all the day's occupations. Her eyes were an intense blue that looked devotedly at me. She seemed another girl to play with. After supper we sat on the floor for a game of jacks or sewed doll's clothes, while Charley pumped away at the old harmonium, his body swaying back and forth as he played and sang Methodist hymns and gospel songs. Sooner or later in the evening he turned toward me and in his tremendous voice, pulling out all the stops, sang the one song I waited for:

*My father is rich in houses and land,  
He holds all the wealth of the world in his hand.*

*With rubies and diamonds, with silver and gold,  
His coffers are full, he has riches untold.*

*I'm the child of a king, the child of a king.  
With Jesus my Saviour, I'm the child of a king.*

My father was rich. Addie was unquestionably the right wife for him, the only wife, and at such moments with her in the house he was happy, her presence brought him peace. The wealth she gave him shone like rubies and diamonds; for she gave him complete love. She had the rare gift, the greatest gift of all, of accepting him as he was, never trying to change his ways but taking her marriage as it had to be, his way – keeping whatever sad misgivings she felt to herself.

Olive Tilford Dargan was born on a farm in Kentucky on January 11, 1869. Ten years later the family moved to the Missouri Ozarks, where her parents founded a school. At age fourteen, Olive became their assistant, teaching forty students in a one-room school ranging in ages from six to twenty. At seventeen, she won a scholarship to Peabody College and, upon graduation, taught in Arkansas and Texas before attending Radcliffe.

At Radcliffe she met Pegram Dargan, a South Carolina poet then a senior at Harvard. After a year teaching in Nova Scotia, she returned to Boston and renewed her friendship with Dargan. When she moved to Blue Ridge, Georgia, to write, the poet followed her there, and they subsequently married and settled down in New York City.



Pack Memorial Library

## OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN (1869 -1968)

It was there that Olive Tilford Dargan began her literary career in 1904 with the publication of poetic dramas and lyric poetry. While in college, she had gone on a camping trip to the mountains of North Carolina and had vowed to have a home there one day, a dream that was fulfilled in 1906 when the Dargans bought Horizon Farm on the Nantahala River in Swain County. Having dependable tenants allowed them to travel extensively, and Olive spent much of her time in England. There she completed a non-fiction work, *The Welsh Pony*, followed by her first book of mountain poetry, *Path Flower and Other Verses*.

When her husband drowned off the coast of Cuba in 1915, Dargan returned to the North Carolina mountains and spent most of her time there until the farmhouse burned in 1923. During this period, she published three distinctly different collections of poetry. *The Cycle's Rim* (1916), a collection of sonnets dedicated to her late husband, won a \$500 prize from the Southern Society of New York. *Lute and Furrow* (1922) contained lyrical verse inspired by her love for the mountains, as does *The Spotted Hawk* (1958), which won the Roanoke-Chowan Poetry Award.

After moving to Asheville in 1925 she wrote the collection of short stories many consider her best work, *Highland Annals*, and three novels under the

pen name Fielding Burke, as well as a final book of verse and a last short story collection. Dargan is widely considered to be one of the best authors ever to come out of the Appalachian South. Few have surpassed her in the description of mountain beauty or in her sympathy for the less fortunate.

Two of her novels revolve around the role of mountain migrants in the Gastonia Mill strike, and the third, *Sons of the Stranger* (1947), takes place in Colorado during a coal mine strike in which the National Guard machine-guns a tent city full of evicted miners. *Call Home the Heart* (1932) is the first of these novels, and generally considered the most powerful. Although published 58 years after her first book, Dargan's last, *Innocent Bigamy and Other Stories*, still revealed enormous talent. One of her most treasured accolades was an honorary degree bestowed upon her in 1925 by the University of North Carolina. She died on January 22, 1968, eleven days after her 99th birthday.

from

## HIGHLAND ANNALS

New York: Scribners, 1925

### VIII

#### "A Proper Funeral"

We were on our way to see Uncle Nathe Ponder buried. Serena was as happy as she could be with decency, considering our solemn destination. She had not been away from home for several months, and her joyous reaction could be suppressed only intermittently. But, at any time, her laughter was pleasantly low of key, as if she were softly trying it out before subjecting you to the full flow that never came.

And Serena was infectious. I had set out with my mind meditatively intrenched on the going down of men into the grave; the passing of man himself, of earth, of suns, of systems, with no full-grown hope of any immortal salvage; but Serena, pulsingly aware in a significant world, soon restored me to stature as a member of a community bent on giving due honor to one whose days among them had been spent with the vividness that amounts to virtue among a people who look to life for their drama instead of the stage and the morning papers.

We had left home early because of Len's prediction that we should have to walk after reaching Red Hog Gap, the entrance to Silver Valley. "But we'll be in two miles o' the graveyard then," he said, "an' can pick it up in no time." Uncle Nathe's farm lay in Silver Valley township only four miles, by crow's wing, northwest of mine, but the descent over cliffs and crags was hazardous and we had set off in exactly the opposite direction, walking the two miles down to Beebread, where Arnold Weaver was waiting on the new highway with his car - the first automobile to become a local pride in our part of the mountains. We soon sailed over the few miles of highway and reached Scatter, the next railroad-station below Beebread, where we turned into the narrow mountain road leading to Uncle Nathe's country. Here we began to come upon people who were walking to the funeral, and it was here that our car, through Len's cordiality, became so firmly packed. He extended invitations until the seats, the floor, and the running-boards would hold no more. "You're payin' fer the whole car," he said, "an' might as well git yer money's worth."

We were bouncing heavily along over the rutty road when ahead of us we saw a young man

whose brisk step was certainly not of the highlands. There were various unsuccessful conjectures as to his identity, and suddenly Len called out: "Hey, Arn, stop yer shooter! It's Ann Lindsay's boy!"

"He'd have to set 'tween yer big toe an' the long un," said Arn. "I ain't goin' to stop no more."

"But he's come all the way from C'lumby to be at Uncle Nathe's buryin'."

"He didn't walk only from Scatter."

"I'll jump out an' let him set in my place."

"You ain't got any place. You're settin' on the tip aidge o' nothin'."

But Arn stopped the car. "Here, Bake," said Len, "I'm gittin' out, an' you hop in. Reckon you know me?"

"Len Merlin!" cried the stranger. "You caught that fox yet?"

"No, he's waitin' fer ye."

"Can't get him this trip. Got to hurry back. Go on, Arn, with your baggage. I'm walking to rest myself. Been on the train since last night. I'll see you all over the hill."

His refusal of the "seat" was positive, and we moved on, but not far. We were climbing the hill leading to Red Hog Gap and Len's prediction came true. The car refused to take the last lap over the hill, though we gave it an opportunity to do its best, by dropping out and scattering as readily as overripe plums from a suddenly shaken bough. With good cheer we began our walk to the graveyard. When nearly there we were overtaken by Bake Lindsay, and Len picked up their broken conversation.

"What yer hurryin' to git back fer? You ain't been in sence when?"

"Not since I was married," said Lindsay, "and that's five years. I started soon as I heard about Uncle Nathe."

"Is he really a nephew of Mr. Ponder?" I asked of the woman walking nearest to me, for with the whole country calling him "uncle," the blood-kin were left without distinction.

"No, he ain't no nephew," she said in a tone that I had learned to recognize as a shut trail in Unakasia. The story was not for me, an outsider. Even Len and Serena had turned a gently impassive front to my very reasonable interest in Uncle Nathe's family history. But Serena now stepped up and said intimately: "Jest wait, Mis' Dolly. We'll go to dinner with Aunt Lizy Haynes. Uncle Nathe's half-brother, Ranz, is stayin' there, an' he's shore to let loose after the buryin'. When Uncle Ranz lets loose it's something else, I'm tryin' to tell ye. They won't be any more questions to ast when he gits through." Then she moved over to Bake. "It's fine, yore comin' in, Bake," she said.

"Of course I wanted to be at the funeral, but," he explained honestly, "I've come mainly to get mother."

"She goin' back with you?" cried half a dozen voices.

"She's promised to. I've been trying to get her to come out to me and Jenny ever since we've been married." Then his voice seemed to struggle a little. "Before we tied up, Jenny gave me her word that she'd be good to mother, and I know she'll keep it."

"You got any young-uns?" asked Len, and Bake said he had a little boy. They had named him Nathan.

"That tickled Uncle Nathe, I reckon," said the woman who had answered me the moment before. Then she hastened to cover her indiscretion. "'Course y'all have been on his place a long time, an' he's been mighty good to ye."

"He's been good to ever'body," said another.

"I reckon he has," said Bake, and we entered the graveyard. It was to be a Masonic funeral. Uncle Nathe's popularity would have drawn a large attendance, but the presence of the Fraternity made the occasion an event in Silver Valley's history. Nathan Ponder had been the only Freemason in his township, a member of the distant lodge in Carson, and for years he had not been in active attendance there, but he had left a request to be buried by the brethren, and they had gallantly responded.

"That's Elmer Jenkins," whispered Serena of a man who was prominent in the ceremony. "He's a lawyer, come up from South C'liny 'bout a year ago, 'count of his wife's health, an' settled in Carson."

"Looks like," said another voice, "that they could 'a' got along 'thout a furriner to tell 'em what to do."

"He's high up in the lodge," said Uncle Ranz Ponder, the half-brother of Uncle Nathe, "an' he seems mighty frien'ly."

The old and impressive service was solemnly conducted to the end, and there was a general breaking-up, amid a conflict of invitations for everybody to go home with everybody else for dinner.

"We'll go with Aunt Lizy," said Serena. "They's a lot been astin' me, but they ain't none of 'em pulled the buttons off my clo's tryin' to take me with 'em, an' I know we'll be full welcome at Aunt Lizy's. Uncle Ranz, he's her cousin, he'll be there, like I said."

So Mrs. Haynes's invitation was accepted. Serena and I were to stay until the next day but Len and the daughter, Lonie, were to return that evening to look after the children, the cows, and the chickens.

The brethren who had come out from Carson returned to town, with the exception of Lawyer Jenkins, who, probably was thinking of profitable affiliations with the remote but fertile valley. I observed him reading the headstones around the new-made grave, and it seemed to me that he was afflicted with a growing concern. He turned, with a question, to the man nearest him, who happened to be Len.

"Am I to understand that our good brother was married four times?"

"You shore air," said Len. "There lays four of as good wives as a man ever had. Them tombstones don't tell no lies. They's all 'fore my time, savin' Aunt Lindy, his last 'un, but I've hearn enough to know what they wuz."

"But four? Isn't it a little unusual?"

"Well, maybe it is, but Uncle Nathe wuzn't no hand to set at home by hissef."

At that moment, to Len's apparent relief, Aunt Lizy came up, and we found that Mr. Jenkins also had accepted her invitation. He walked with her husband Uncle Dan'l Haynes, and I gathered from drifting fragments of their conversation that Mr. Jenkins was still on the trail of Uncle Nathe's connubial history.

At the dinner-table he pleased all of the guests by introducing the topic from which they were politely holding back. "I have been learning from our kind host," he said, eying with favor his selected piece of fried chicken, "what this loss means to the community."

"Yes," some one responded, "it knocks all of us, losin' Nathe does."

"There is some property too, I believe. I trust there is harmony among the heirs."

"They're all behavin' fine," said Aunt Lizy, with some heartiness.

"Our brother was married several times, I understand. Did - er - all of his wives leave issue?"

"Younguns? No, Aunt Lindy never had any, ner Lu Siler, but Callie had a little feller that died - Rufe, they called him. An' Ponnice, his fust wife, left four, all livin' yit. They git along together fust-rate."

"I wonder what Ponnice would 'a' said," reflected Uncle Dan'l, "ef somebody had told her Nathe wouldn't be buried alongside o' her."

"Well," said Uncle Ranz, "I'd ruther not hear what Ponnice would 'a' said."

"I say it ought to 'a' been Lindy he wuz laid by," asserted Aunt Lizy. "She lived with him the longest an' worked the hardest."

"She didn't think a grain more o' him than Lu Siler did," returned Uncle Dan'l.

"Our brother expressed no preference?" inquired Mr. Jenkins.

"You mean which un did he want to lay 'longside of? No, he wuzn't a man to put one wife 'fore another. He left that to us."

"Very thoughtful, I take it," said the lawyer. "A strong character certainly. I am sorry I never knew him." And he mused a little on the bed-rock qualities of the old mountaineer.

"We meant," explained Uncle Dan'l, "to lay Nathe by his fust wife, Ponnice, but when we dug down there we struck a rock that would 'a' had to be blasted out, an' we's afeard it would shake up the graves. We couldn't lay him t'other side o' her, 'cause her two childern wuz there, an' then come Lindy, his last wife, so we decided to dig jest beyant Lindy. But about four feet down we come to water that turned ever'thing inter mud - it wuz that spring, I reckon, that sinks inter the ground above the graveyard - an' we had to go to the upper row where Callie an' little Rufe an' Lu wuz layin'. We couldn't put him by Lu, 'cause she wuz in the aidge o' the Ponder lot, right next to Randy Hayes in Bill Hayes's lot, an' it jest had to be Callie er nothin'."

Comments followed, various and spirited, with citations of other instances, historic and contemporary, and the dinner was over. Mr. Jenkins regretted that he must leave us. He was urged to stay, in the politest highland manner, but when the door had closed behind the respected "furriner," the immediate relaxation in the air showed that the hour of restraint had been heroically prolonged.

"Harmony!" exclaimed Aunt Lizy. "An' there's Angie Sue claimin' ever'thing her daddy had. There won't be a scrap left when they all git through fightin'."

The general glance slanted toward me, and I began to think that I ought to have disappeared with Mr. Jenkins, though the fact that I was under Serena's native wing had done much to vouch for me.



BURKE DAVIS  
(1913- )

Burke Davis was born in Durham on July 24, 1913, and moved with his family to Greensboro when he was six. In high school, he was prodded by his mother into entering an essay contest, which he won. The title of his winning entry: "My Experience as a Snake Man in the Boy Scouts." At Guilford, Duke and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Davis initially set his sights on a career in advertising, but later wandered into journalism, taking newspaper jobs in Charlotte, Baltimore and, finally, back in Greensboro.

In 1960 he left Greensboro to spend the next twenty years as special projects writer for Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. With some fifty books to his credit, Davis is known for both the quality and the variety of his work: novels, biographies, historical tales, and more than a

dozen books for young readers, both fiction and non-fiction. A painstaking researcher, he portrays the characters in his novels as realistic human beings, warts and all.

His very first title was *Whisper My Name* (1949), a novel that deals with a prominent businessman in Charlotte, so thinly disguised that it caused a local sensation over its allegedly fictional disclosures. His first book for young readers was *Roberta E. Lee* (1956), about a rabbit who was a Southern belle. Two histories for students followed, *America's First Army* (1962), about the colonial militia, and *Appomattox* (1963). Some of his many other titles for young readers include *Rebel Raider: A Biography of Admiral Semmes* (1966), about a Confederate hero, co-authored by Evangeline Davis; *Heroes of the American Revolution* (1971); *Biography of a Leaf* (1973); and *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* (1978).

The *Ragged Ones* (1951) and *Yorktown* (1952) are among his historical novels, which one critic opined went far beyond the point in their historical realism than even James Boyd was willing to go. For the first of these Revolutionary War books, Davis gathered a huge file on various topics: uniforms, geography, firearms, personalities. He even compiled a weather calendar for the first months of 1781 so he could know what conditions were like on any given day.

Beginning with *They Called Him Stonewall* (1954), Davis turned his attention to the Civil War, following with *Gray Fox* (1956), the story of Lee's Civil War years, and *Jeb Stewart: The Last Cavalier* (1957). His *To Appomattox: Nine April Days, 1865* (1959) won the Mayflower Cup. He returned to fiction with *The Summer Land* (1965). Of his later publications, *The Billy Mitchell Affair* (1967) and *Sherman's March* (1980) are outstanding. His *Black Heroes of the American Revolution* also stood out among books published during the nation's Bicentennial. He and Helen Bevington were awarded the North Carolina Award for Literature in 1973, and the North Caroliniana Society honored him in 1990 for his contributions to the cultural life of the state.

from

### *THEY CALLED HIM STONEWALL*

New York: Rhinehart, 1954. Reprinted by permission of Burke Davis.

Prologue

#### JOHN BROWN'S BODY

It had been a long wait on the hill, with the crowd shivering under a wind from upriver, but at last, just before noon there was a stir on the porch of the jail.

An ugly old man appeared there, shuffling in carpet slippers, wearing a long-tailed coat and black hat, blinking in the light of the sun, which had just emerged. Men standing near by caught the odor of him and his time in the jail.

The prisoner walked stiffly, and was drawn forward by the pain of a kidney ailment, so that his step seemed tentative and doddering. He handed a folded bit of paper to his jailer, who rustled it as if to read it, but the old man spoke, and the jailer thrust the note into his pocket.

The old man craned his wattled neck to peer at soldiers moving in the roadway beneath - three infantry companies wheeling into line. Other troops waited beyond.

"I had no idea Governor Wise thought my murder so important," the prisoner said. The nasal voice was unhurried and bitter; the set of the cracked lips betrayed no fear.

He went forward as if accompanied by friends, down a flight of stairs with his jailer on one arm and the sheriff on the other. They clambered into a waiting wagon, and when the old man had settled himself on a coffin between the seats, the driver snapped his whip over the rumps of two white farm horses. The prisoner paid no heed to the box on which he sat, and all about, at their distance, the troops watched with covert curiosity the stiff-backed old man who bore himself as if impatient to die. The wagon crawled behind the militia infantry, its wheels strewing the merest dust, and the coffin trailing an odor of fresh lumber.

The wagon went up toward the crest of the hill, where the gallows were.

"A man couldn't have asked prettier weather," old Brown said. Neither the sheriff nor the jailer looked at the prisoner.

The old man's hatchet face had a pleasant, almost happy, expression as he gazed around at the country under the dull sky. Hills tumbled to the west, incredibly blue in the distance; to the east, where the waters of the Shenandoah and the Potomac met, the river banks loomed in vast shoulders. The prisoner saw above these the smoke of Harpers Ferry, where ruin had come to him.

The wagon turned into a hollow square of troops, one thousand of them, and went past a piece



of artillery which gaped toward the gallows with gunners at attention. The old man raised his head once more to the valley of the Shenandoah.

"This is a beautiful country," he said. "I never truly had the pleasure of seeing it before."

"None like it," the sheriff said.

The prisoner was first to mount the scaffold, and when he stood above the crowd, he snatched off his dusty hat, which he dropped at his feet. His hair rose in an unkempt gray shock.

Two men fitted the white hood over his head and adjusted the rope. In the last glimpse of light, the prisoner caught sight of the red and gray uniforms of cadets of the Virginia Military Institute who stood between the regiments of militia. Once the hood was on, the jailer stirred his feet, as if adapting himself to a new sense of relief.

Half a dozen hands thrust over the scaffold, groping for the prisoner's fallen hat, and one of them dragged it off, evading the jailer's vicious kicks. Subdued sounds came from below, where unseen men fought over the souvenir.

The old man's voice was muffled by the hood. "I can't see, gentlemen. You must lead me."

The sheriff and a guard led him to the trap, where he stood in the broken slippers, waiting. The militia stamped endlessly in the dust below, going back to its places in the square.

"You want a private signal, now, just before?" the sheriff asked.

"It's no matter to me. If only they would not keep me waiting so long." The sheriff and the jailer did not now recognize the old voice they knew so well; it was formal and somehow remote. It was the first slight sign of fear or remorse or even hesitation the old man had shown them, and the two officers exchanged glances of veiled triumph.

The militia was ten minutes at its stumbling, while the old man waited, now and then bending his knees to make himself comfortable. Each of the other figures on the scaffold seemed to grow more rigid as time passed. The sheriff looked far down the hill on every hand, creasing his brow over an expression of childlike earnestness, as if he entertained the fear that someone might storm the hilltop, crowned as it was with a mass of troops, in an effort to deliver the old man.

The very young men of the Virginia Military Institute smirked at the awkward militia; but their smiles were fleeting and hidden from the bearded officer who sat his horse on their right front, as if daydreaming. The commander was a sorry figure, clasped tightly in a shabby coat. He was the obscure Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy and Artillery Tactics from the Institute in Lexington.

"Lookit old Tom Fool," one of the cadets whispered. "Another wink, and he's asleep."

"Giving orders to God," another scoffed. "We heard him last night, apraying for old Brown's soul like a damned niggerlover."

Major Thomas Jonathan Jackson, almost as if he had heard the words of the child soldiers, stirred and turned his gaze down the line. "Gentlemen," he piped. The cadets fell silent.

From the ranks of the Richmond militia across the square, a thin-shouldered infantryman glared at the hooded figure on the scaffold. The militiaman's eyes were dark with excitement, as if he had quite lost himself in the spectacle. He was Private John Wilkes Booth. Major Jackson galloped between the companies, herding them into order, and then settled once more, head lowered, withdrawing into his wrinkled uniform. Already he was thinking of writing a letter to his wife, a description of old Brown's end. A few nights earlier he had reassured her:

Charlestown, Nov. 28, 1859

I reached here last night in good health and spirits. Seven of us slept in the same room. I am much more pleased than I expected to be; the people appear to be very kind. There are about 1,000 troops here, and everything is quiet so far. We don't expect any trouble. The excitement is

confined to more distant points. Do not give yourself any concern about me. I am comfortable, for a temporary military post.

There was at length an end to the shuffling of feet in the field, and on the scaffold there were slight movements. The prisoner muttered to his jailer, "Be quick, Avis."

The jailer tightened the noose, stepped backward, and the sheriff took a hatchet from a guard. The glinting blade parted a rope, thumped into the wood, and the old man dropped through the platform. The rope whipped back and forth, spinning, rasping against the scaffold, and then began to slow its motion. No sound came from the field where the watchers stood.

After an interval, Major J. T. L. Preston, the Institute Latin professor, shouted, as if he read from a paper - so loudly that all of them heard:

"So perish all such enemies of Virginia! All such enemies of the Union! All such enemies of the human race!"

The troops were ordered at ease, and stood in the square for half an hour longer, while the dark bundle stilled on the scaffold. A band of men went there, and the body was cut down. The soldiers moved off, and behind them rose the clatter of hammers on the coffin case. The jailer, thrusting a hand into his pocket, drew forth the paper on which the old man had written. He read its trembling script.

Charlestown, Va., 2nd December, 1859.

I John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land; will never be purged away; but with Blood...

The jailer shook his head, grinning uncertainly, and passed the paper to the sheriff, who was to deliver it to the widow.

It was no later than twelve thirty, but the shadow of the gallows already lay across the dust of the slope, where the Virginia soldiers had marched and the horses of their officers had torn the cold turf.

Major Jackson rose directly from supper and sat down to the writing of a letter to his wife. With his bluff manner of detachment, he closed his mind to the passage of the others in his room:

December 2nd. John Brown was hung today at about half-past eleven A.M. He behaved with unflinching firmness.... The coffin was of black walnut, enclosed in a box of poplar.... He was dressed in a black frock-coat, black pantaloons, black vest, black slouch hat, white socks, and slippers of predominating red. There was nothing about his neck but his shirt collar...

Brown fell through about five inches, his knees falling on a level with the position occupied by his feet before the rope was cut. With the fall his arms, below the elbows, flew up horizontally, his hands clinched; and his arms gradually fell, but by spasmodic motions. There was very little motion of his person for several moments, and soon the wind blew his lifeless body to and fro.

His face, upon the scaffold, was turned a little east of south, and in front of him were the cadets, commanded by Major Gilham. My command was still in front of the cadets, all facing south... altogether it was an imposing but very solemn scene.

I was much impressed with the thought that before me stood a man in the full vigor of health, who must in a few moments enter eternity. I sent up the petition that he might be saved. Awful was the thought that he might in a few minutes receive the sentence, "Depart ye wicked, into ever-lasting fire!" I hope that he was prepared to die, but I am doubtful. He refused to have a minister with him. His wife visited him last evening.

His body was taken to the jail, and at six o'clock P.M. was sent to his wife at Harpers Ferry. When it arrived, the coffin was opened, and his wife saw the remains, after which it was again opened at the depot before leaving for Baltimore, lest there should be an imposition. We leave for home via Richmond tomorrow.



ROBERT RUARK  
(1915-1965)

Journalist, author, world traveler, sportsman, and syndicated columnist Robert Chester Ruark was born in Wilmington on December 29, 1915. He started college at age 15 at the University of North Carolina, graduating with an A.B. in journalism in 1935. He worked as a reporter for the *Hamlet News Messenger* and later transferred to the *Sanford Herald*. During the next few years, Ruark worked as an accountant with the Works Progress Administration in Washington, D.C., enlisted as an ordinary seaman, and worked at the *Washington Post* and the *Star* before settling down at the *Washington Daily News*. In 1938, he married Virginia Webb, a Washington interior decorator.

During World War II, Ruark joined the Navy as a gunnery officer and later became a press censor in the Pacific. He returned to the *Washington Daily News* in 1945, where his syndicated column made him a household name and earned him the then princely sum of \$40,000 a year. In his column, Ruark revealed a gift for expressing aversion amusingly, often in a facetiously ungrammatical style. He aimed his stinging wit at psychiatrists, Southern cooking, army generals, the state of Texas, progressive schools, scheming women, and other pet peeves. His sharpest assaults were collected in two books, *I Didn't Know It Was Loaded* (1948) and *One for the Road* (1949).

During this time he also began writing fiction. With his first novel, *Grenadine Etching* (1947), he lampooned historical romances that were all the rage at the time. It was followed by *Grenadine's Spawn* (1952). He also published articles regularly in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers*, *Esquire*, and *Field & Stream*.

After 1950, Ruark began spending time in Africa, publishing *Horn of the Hunter: The Story of an African Hunt* (1953), about an African safari, and *Something of Value* (1955). Based on the Mau-Mau uprisings against British colonialists, this latter book took its title from an old Basuto proverb: "If a man does away with his traditional way of living and throws away his good

customs, he had better first make certain that he has something of value to replace them." The book was a major success, earning the author more than a million dollars from royalties and the film rights.

Some critics disparaged Ruark as a Hemingway imitator, and some readers found the violence of his African novels shocking, but his writing easily stands on its own merits. For years he wrote a regular monthly column in *Field & Stream* entitled "The Old Man and The Boy," in which he recounted his experiences growing up on the North Carolina coast in and around Southport under the tender guidance of his grandfather, who taught him the art of hunting, fishing, and training dogs. These columns were subsequently collected in two books, *The Old Man and the Boy* (1957) and *The Old Man's Boy Grows Older* (1961), which chronicled the boyhood lessons learned—integrity, compassion, tolerance, and a deep and abiding love for the outdoors.

After visiting North Carolina in 1957, Ruark settled permanently in Spain. Three more books followed. *Poor No More* (1959) was an embittered rags-to-riches saga set in the U.S. and Europe. It was followed in 1962 by *Uhuru*, the sequel to *Something of Value*. Published shortly after his death, his last book, *The Honey Badger* (1965), concerned a North Carolina writer torn between work and women. Ruark died suddenly in London in 1965 and is buried in Palamos, north of Barcelona.

from

#### THE OLD MAN AND THE BOY

New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1957.

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#### "The Pipes of Pan"

The first promise of summer was always an exciting thing to a boy – the spring winds eased and the sun burned away the April rains, the green pushed softly up and all the smells began. Mornings before breakfast were delightfully cool and breezy, and bred a restless excitement that made you want to caper barefoot on the dew-wet grass.

The smells were something. Down by the creek the dogtooth violets pushed up through the moss. The heavy tuberosy smell of the yellow jasmine filled the countryside, and the dogwood trees were white and pink with delicate bloom. In the orchards the early peaches and plums were breaking into blossom, adding their scents to the wild ones. The first tame flowers were popping out into the warmth, competing with the wild violets and the Johnny-jump-ups. I used to think that heaven would smell like this – cool and moist and very delicately fragrant.

You took to the woods then, not as a hunter or a fisherman, but as a naturalist. The Old Man was very firm about that.

"You're a bloodthirsty savage," he said, "like all boys are bloodthirsty savages. But there's a heap more to it than killing. Seeing the whole world come alive again after a long winter's nap and a wild, wet spring is more fun, 'specially as you grow older, than all the shootin' and fishin' there

is. And I never was able to explain it, but the critters seem to notice this too. You'll see how tame everything is this time of the year, when it's wilder'n a buck rabbit in the shootin' season."

Maybe it seems a little dull today, but we used to go berry picking, after the blackberries had turned from green to red to purple-black, glistening on their thorny vines, and found it exciting. There were so many things to see and hear in the spring when you took a pail and went out berrying, to come home tired, with a crick in your back and your fingers and lips dyed purple from the juicy berries. There were birds around that I do not seem to see so often any more – brilliant bluebirds, which came early in the spring and went away later in the summer. There were lots and lots of the big, fierce-looking redheaded woodpeckers; lots of what we called yellowhammers, another species of peckerwood known as flicker; the big cuckoos we called rain crows; the carnivorous shrikes with the bandit's velvet masks across their cold robbers' eyes; and hordes of the big, brilliant, raucously screaming blue jays.

The wet, plowed fields were crowded with teams of killdeers and the dainty-walking titlarks, racing along like pacing horses. The bobolinks were beginning to sway on the ends of high weeds, the stalks bending under their negligible weight. Soon the Baltimore orioles would be along, filling the air with sounds like the clinking of coins. The big cardinals were patches of blood against the dark green of the pines and cedars, and the scarlet tanagers darted like airborne snakes.

When I think of it now, I think of it in terms of sounds and smells rather than sights. The catbirds quarreled in the low bushes around the house, and the big, fat, sassy old mocker that lived in the magnolia mimicked the catbirds. The doves cooed sadly from a great distance, and the quail called from the brushy cover at the edge of the cultivation. They came marching boldly into the strawberry patches, not in coveys but in pairs, walking through the back yard as if they owned it.

The killdeers wheeled and dipped in clouds over the wet fields, the skies filled with the mournful *kill-dee, kill-dee*, and the meadowlarks sang in the fields, and out of the wet places came the wild, sweet song of the woodcock. The crows and the jays raised general hell with everything, including the spring, and you could hear the rain crows' hollow *tonk* from some hidden position in a tall pine, and the solid knock of the woodpeckers, and the sweet chirrup of the little bluebirds.

This was the time of the year when the boys rushed out of school to swim naked in the creek at recess, and when it seemed impossible not to cut classes. This was the time of the bellyache from eating berries that had not completely ripened, from experimenting with stone-hard green peaches; and this also was the time of the lavish use of castor oil and calomel. It was impossible to concentrate in school, for the drowsy hum of June was just over the hill. Hence this was the time that boys were kept after school for throwing spitballs and making paper airplanes and dipping pigtails into inkpots. Summer vacation was yearned for by the teachers even more eagerly than it was craved by the students. Marks dropped terribly, and discipline teetered on the ragged edge of anarchy.

The Old Man said he reckoned the whole world went a little crazy at this time of the year, and he told me if I listened real close I could hear the piping of some old pagan god named Pan, who was half billy goat, away off in the wood. I told the Old Man that if Pan was anything like my billy goat I would just as lief have nothing to do with him.

"Be that as it may," the Old Man said, "that wood back there is creeping with all sorts of forest gods and spirits right now, and if we went and set quiet I ain't so sure but what we might see some. Hear 'em, anyhow."

The forest he mentioned was located back of the cow lot, and it was bounded by a big field of

sedge where my pet covey of quail lived, and by a gully in which my secret interlocking caves were built, and by a big pond in which the diedappers swam and dived, and by a big soybean field that was full of doves in the fall. The forest covered about six acres, and was composed of towering pines and twisty live oaks and dogwood trees. Its floor was clean and mostly free of brush, a slippery floor of pine needles and jaunty wild flowers.

The Old Man and I spent a lot of time back there. We had to remodel some of the caves, which meant we needed fresh pine saplings for the front and some fresh beams under the heavy sod roofs, so some woodcutting was in order. It takes a lot of work to keep a cave in good shape, especially when there are half a dozen connected by long tunnels. The reason we needed so many caves was that I was then chieftain of a robber band, and in watermelon season the robbers needed plenty of sudden sanctuary.

Sometimes, when we got tired of working on the caves, the Old Man and I would sit down under a tree and lean back against the bole. He would light his pipe and tell me all sorts of wild tales about the Druids, who lived in trees, and the first Britons, who dug enormous caves called dene holes in the Kentish countryside in England, and about the bad spirits that lived in the Black Forest in Germany, and about the old pagan gods like Pan, who, I gathered, was a pretty fast fellow with the girls.

The Old Man had been near about everywhere, and I guess he had read just about everything, because anything I remember today I remember from what he told me. I always got pretty high grades in geography, because if they asked what country Kent was a county of, like New Hanover or Brunswick County in my state, I could always say "England," on account of the dene holes. I understood what a dene hole was because the Old Man and I had just dug us one.

We saw a lot of interesting things, just sitting quiet or walking carefully. One time I saw a rain crow, one of those big cuckoos, chase a dove off a nest and settle down in it herself. I went back the next day and shinnied up the tree, and sure enough, there was one great big egg laid in the clutch of smaller dove's eggs.

We saw the squirrels fighting and chasing each other through the trees, and once I saw two squirrels breeding. The rabbits hopped around softly and unafraid of us. Once a deer and a fawn walked right up to us and stared for a long time, and then the old lady sort of nodded to junior and they went off not running, not jumping, just sort of frisking, with junior kicking up his heels.

I never did get to see Pan or any of the other strange people that live in the woods, but I swear I heard noises that I couldn't hook up to bird or frog or animal or insect, and soft rustlings that proved to be nothing at all when I went to look, my skin goose-pimpled and my neck hair lifting like a worried dog's when he hears a sound he can't quite figger.

What I did get was the feeling that there were spirits who lived in trees, and that there was something very special about an ancient wood, and that there was some peculiar magic about the late spring that has been justified by the behavior of beasts and people down through the ages. (This I learned later from books.)

There had been some talk among the grown-ups at the time about sending me off to the mountains to a boys' camp, and I was hot for it until the spring got soft and sweet and started to beckon toward the summer, and the Old Man and I made our daily pilgrimages past the cow lot and into the secret woods. But in May I would begin to weaken on this camp thing, and by June the camps had lost a customer. I knew when I had it good, because the Old Man always used to say that a smart feller knew when he was well off and was a goldarned fool to change it for something he didn't know about.

Then, too, you understand, I was too busy to go to camp. The Old Man and I had a lot of projects together, apart from the baseball and the swimming with the other boys. We had to get the boat in shape for the summer's fishing, and there was a puppy litter about due. We wanted to do some work on the duck blind, of course, and there was this billy goat to discipline – I guess you remember we failed on that one. And then there was fishing, of course, salt-water for blackfish and speckled trout and croakers, and fresh-water for bass, and by the time we got done fishing it would be September and the tides would swell, and then there would be the marsh hens jumping creakily out of the flooded marshes.

When we finished with the marsh hens, the bluefish would be along; and when we got through with the bluefish and the puppy drum, then the quail season would be on us, and before you knew it, Christmas holidays had come and gone.

We were sitting quietly in the secret forest one day, waiting to hear some word from the Old Man's friend, Pan, when he stabbed his pipe at me and said, "I suppose you're going off to camp this summer and leave me alone and unprotected with all the grown-ups, eh?"

"I reckon not," I said.

"Why not? They got all sorts of things up there in the mountains. They got counselors, and a swimming lake, and archery, and woodworking, and basket making, and lectures, and all sorts of things. You'll get to live in a tent and paddle a canoe and — "

"I been in a tent and I got a boat and I got the Atlantic Ocean and the Cape Fear River to swim in," I told him. "I got you for a counselor. I ain't interested in basket making or archery, because I got a shotgun and a boat that needs fixin'. I just ain't got time to play with children. The duck blind's a mess."

"But here it is just spring, with a whole summer ahead of you," the Old Man was teasing me.

"The way I figger, I'm through Christmas already," I said, "and by that time it'll be puppy-training time and we're right back in the summer again."

"I expect you may be right," the Old Man admitted. "Time just seems to fly away for a boy. That, I s'pose, is why one day you wake up suddenly and you ain't a boy any longer. Anyhow, I'm glad you ain't going. It gets awful lonesome around here with all them grown-ups."

## IN TRIBUTE

Sam Ragan was for more than fifty years one of North Carolina's leading men of letters. As the state's first secretary of the Department of Cultural Resources and first chairman of the North Carolina Arts Council, he was instrumental in making the arts in the state accessible to a wide, varied audience. Born in Granville County, Ragan began writing poetry in grade school. By the time he was a student at Atlantic Christian (Barton) College, he knew he wanted to be a newspaperman. Ragan joined the *Raleigh News & Observer* in 1941 and, by the time he left in 1968 to buy *The Pilot* in Southern Pines, he was the *News & Observer's* managing and executive editor. He stayed at *The Pilot* until his death, continuing to write "Southern Accent," the column he began in 1948.



SAMUEL TALMADGE  
RAGAN  
(1915-1996)

Ragan published six collections of verse and four works of nonfiction. His poetry has been called "sensitive to the seasons of life, the sureties and contradictions of living, the elements in which we exist...written out of a Tar Heel's sense of place." When Governor James B. Hunt, Jr., appointed him North Carolina Poet Laureate in 1982, Ragan responded, "I don't know that I'll write poetry on demand, but I would like to encourage North Carolinians to read and write poetry. I'll be happy to do that."

### The Marked and Unmarked

from *To the Water's Edge*  
Moore Publishing Company, 1971

I cannot say upon which luminous evening  
I shall go out beyond the stars,  
To windless spaces and unmarked time,  
Turning nights to days and days to nights.

This is the place where I live.  
I planted this tree.  
I watched it grow.  
The leaves fall and I scuff them with my feet.  
This is the street on which I walk.  
I have walked it many times.  
Sometimes it seems there are echoes of my  
walking—

In the mornings, in the nights,  
In those long evenings of silence and stars

—the unmarked stars.



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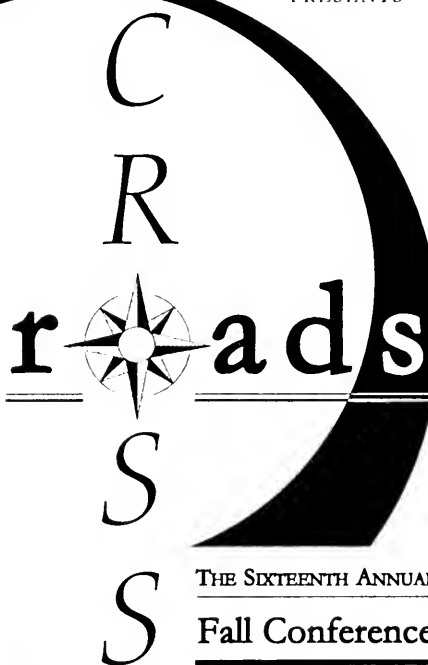
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**The late Sam Ragan, editor and publisher of The Pilot from 1968-1996, was instrumental in bringing the Hall of Fame to Weymouth and Southern Pines. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1997.**



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